Greenspun Says Hughes File Was Sought

5/23/73

By TOM BUCKLEY

Special to The New York Times

LAS VEGAS, Nev., May 22—Hank Greenspun, editor and publisher of The Las Vegas Sun, charged today that a burglary attempt at his office last summer was not to obtain "blackmail - type information" on Democratic Presidential candidates, as James W. McCord Jr. testified this morning at the Senate's Watergate hearing in Washington.

Instead, he said, the attempt was made to acquire hundreds of signed memorandums by Howard Hughes, the industrialist, that are in his possession.

Mr. Greenspun would not disclose in any detail the contents of these memorandums or how he had obtained them, but he said they dealt in part with Mr. Hughes's contacts with the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice in connection with his holdings in Nevada, which are valued at between $200-million and $300-million.

"I cannot disclose now what is in these files," he stated, "but it will come out in due time. But I'll go to the can for life rather than surrender those documents."

Says Plane Was Involved

"Hughes would give anything to get his hands on them," Mr. Greenspun said in an interview. "That's why a Hughes plane was involved and why, as McCord testified, its destination was to be a Latin-American country. Hughes was in Nicaragua at the time of the attempted break-in."

Mr. Greenspun and Mr. Hughes are adversaries in a lawsuit. Mr. Greenspun is seeking $132-million from the industrialist in a treble damage suit that grew out of a complicated real estate deal in which the recluse billionaire first agreed and then decided not to purchase Mr. Greenspun's Paradise Valley Country Club outside this city. Mr. Greenspun in 1968 sold KLAS-TV, the local Columbia Broadcasting System affiliate, to Mr. Hughes for $4-million.

The publisher said that the documents in his possession did not relate to the damage suit

Associated Press

Hank Greenspun

The choice of Prof. Archibald Cox of the Harvard Law School as the Watergate special prosecutor was questioned by Mr. Greenspun.

"His brother, Maximilian Cox, is a law partner of Chester Davis, Howard Hughes's attorney," said the publisher, who is himself a lawyer.

Known as a crusading editor since he took over a strike paper set up by the International Typographical Union for a $1,000 down payment in 1950, Mr. Greenspun said he was outraged by the disclosures at the hearings.

"As a man who is not easily astounded I find this testimony by Mr. McCord catastrophically disturbing," he asserted. "If in fact the forces of the Federal Government were employed to serve the private interests of Howard Hughes, then I am completely disillusioned by the thought that they may have been turned over to a massive political contributor."

Mr. Greenspun said that he had learned "on the highest authority" that Robert Bennett, a son of Wallace F. Bennett, Republican Senator from Utah, had testified in a "secret hearing" that he had presented a blank check from the Hughes interests to the Nixon campaign fund and that it had been cashed for a very large sum, although the amount was unknown to him.

Ironically, Mr. Greenspun's paper supported Mr. Nixon in the 1972 campaign and the publisher was himself, in his words, "a substantial contributor." He added, "I also gave to Hubert Humphrey and Scoop Jackson. Let's say I believe in the electoral process and want to show it."

Senators Humphrey of Minnesota and Henry M. Jackson of Washington are Democrats.

Even more painful to Mr. Greenspun is the fact that an inscribed and autographed photograph of the President hangs directly over the four-foot-square, light-green safe in the corner of his office that the burglars tried to break into.

Heavy Tools Used

He said he was not certain when the burglary attempt occurred. He said he had noticed that the aluminum sills of his office window, which are concealed behind heavy curtains, had been jimmied and that the safe bore the marks of heavy tools having been used on it when he returned from a vacation trip last September.

"I had to stay prepared," he said, pointing to a heavy metal plate that had been welded to its door. "I placed double locks on my office doors and removed the Hughes documents to another location."

Mr. Greenspun said that allegations made in Republican circles that the safe contained documents linking an unnamed Democratic Presidential candidate to organized crime, which until five or 10 years ago controlled many of Las Vegas' casino hotels, were "completely untrue."

The only material "remotely resembling" anything like this, he went on, was information pertaining to a conviction of Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Maine Democrat, in 1965 for violating regulations while hunting ducks with Eugene J. McCarthy, then a Democratic Senator from Minnesota, on a Federal reservation. Each was fined $27.50, according to a biography, "Muskie," By Theo Lippman Jr. and Donald C. Hansen.

"I checked it out with Jack Anderson, [the columnist] in Washington," Mr. Greenspun said. "I found it was true but I decided it wasn't important enough to use. In my judgment, they were not after the Muskie documents anyhow but after the Hughes material."